

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 SSC-01 EB-11 COME-00 OMB-01 STR-08

SAM-01 DRC-01 /138 W

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P R 100830Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7842

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 1782

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FI

SUBJECT: MINISTERIAL CHANGES IN FINNISH COALITION
GOVERNMENT

REF: HELSINKI 1064; HELSINKI 1158

SUMMARY: AS A SURPRISE MOVE THE SWEDISH PEOPLE'S PARTY, ONE OF FOUR PARTNERS IN SOCIAL-DEMOCRAT-LED COALITION GOVERNMENT, ON SEPTEMBER 6 NOMINATED CARL-OLAF HOMEN TO BE ITS NEW MINISTER, PM SORSA, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY REJECTED NOMINATION OF INGVAR MELIN, HAS AGREED TO HOMEN, WHO WILL REPLACE GESTRIN AS DEFENSE MINISTER ON OCTOBER 1. GESTRIN WILL TAKE OVER AS MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE FROM JANSSON, WHO BECOMES CHIEF EDITOR OF HUFVUDSTADE-BLADET. OUT OF NOMINATION DEBACLE SORSA EMERGES AS WINNER, MELIN AS LOSER, AND SWEDISH PARTY EVEN.

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1. SWEDISH PEOPLE'S PARTY (SFP), BEING ONE OF

TWO SMALL PARTNERS, HAS ONLY HAD TWO MINISTERS IN SORSA COALITION GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS, EVER SINCE IT BECAME KNOWN ABOUT A YEAR AGO THAT MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE JAN-MAGNUS JANSSON WOULD LEAVE GOVERNMENT TO BECOME CHIEF EDITOR OF MAIN SWEDISH LANGUAGE AND PARTY ORGAN HUFVUDSTADSBLADET BY OCTOBER 1974, QUESTION OF WHO WOULD BE NEXT SFP MINISTER HAS AROUSED GREAT INTEREST.

2. SFP WAS IN DIFFICULT POSITION. FIRST IT HAD SUFFERED SETBACK OF RIGHT-WINGER GEORG C. EHRNROOTH QUITTING PARTY TO LEAD NEW CONSTITUTIONALIST PARTY. THIS WAS SOMEWHAT OFFSET BY UNIFICATION OF THREE RIGHT-OF-CENTER FACTIONS IN MAY 1974, INCLUDING "MODERATE" FACTION LED BY INGVAR MELIN. THEN IT BARELY MANAGED TO PERSUADE MIDDLE-OF-ROAD MP TALLGREN TO ACCEPT PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP AT JUNE 1974 CONGRESS.

3. THIS MEANT THAT TALLGREN WAS EFFECTIVELY OUT OF RUNNING FOR MINISTER AND LEFT FIELD WIDE OPEN FOR MELIN. A FORMER MP WITH AN OBVIOUS POLITICAL ITCH, MELIN QUICKLY MOVED TO FILL VACUUM. HIS PRESS PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN ALMOST SUCCEEDED, BECAUSE BY SEPTEMBER 5 MOST PEOPLE HAD COME TO ACCEPT AS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT MELIN WOULD BE NEW SFP MINISTER.

4. ONLY QUESTION SEEMED TO BE WHICH PORTFOLIO MELIN WOULD BE GIVEN. WITH HIS BACKGROUND IN ECONOMICS AND JOB AS DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS FOR EMPLOYERS FEDERATION, HE SEEMED A NATURAL AS MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE. AT SAME TIME, IT WAS KNOWN THAT FORMER SFP CHAIRMAN, MP KRISTIAN GESTRIN, HAD TIRED OF HIS JOB AS DEFENSE MINISTER, AND WANTED CHANGE. GESTRIN HAD, MOREOVER, SUFFERED RELAPSE OF SERIOUS ULCER PROBLEM.

5. THE SFP WAS IN A QUANDARY. MELIN CAMPAIGN HAD PROGRESSED TO POINT WHERE SFP WAS FORCED TO DECIDE.
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IT HAD NOTHING AGAINST MELIN, AND WANTED TO SATISFY HIS FACTION. THE SFP FIRST SOUNDED OUT PRESIDENT KEKKONEN (WHO CONSTITUTIONALLY HAS TO APPOINT ALL MINISTERS). KEKKONEN RAISED NO OBJECTION TO MELIN. SFP THEN INFORMALLY SOUNDED OUT SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (LEADING COALITION PARTNER). THEY LEARNED OF SOCDEM OPPOSITION TO MELIN, BUT MISJUDGED INTENSITY OF IT.

6. DESPITE KNOWN SOCDEM OPPOSITION, SFP EXECUTIVE, ACCORDING TO SFP SEC GEN OLANDER--AFTER CHECKING WITH MELIN ON WHETHER HE WANTED TO MAKE LAST DITCH FIGHT--DECIDED TO PROPOSE GESTRIN FOR MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE AND MELIN AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE.

7. WHEN SFP EXECUTIVE IN AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 6 CONVEYED ITS DECISION TO SOCDEM PRIME MINISTER SORSA (IN BELIEF SORSA WOULD NOT HAVE GUTS TO FIGHT), SORSA SAID HE WOULD CHECK WITH KEKKONEN AND TRADE UNION CENTRAL FEDERATION CHAIRMAN HAMALAINEN. TWO HOURS LATER SORSA REJECTED SFP PROPOSAL. IT IS NOT CLEAR TO US YET WHAT PROMPTED SORSA'S DECISION--WHETHER IT WAS HE HIMSELF, FEAR OF GIVING POSSIBLE RIVAL HAMALAINEN AN ISSUE, OR SWEDO-FINNISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATS SEIZING OPPORTUNITY TO STRIKE BLOW AT SFP. SORSA'S OFFICIAL EXPLANATION FOR HIS REJECTION OF MELIN WAS THAT IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES ONE COULD NOT HAVE REPRESENTATIVE OF EMPLOYERS IN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT ALSO HAVING REPRESENTATIVE OF TRADE UNIONS. (THERE HAVE BEEN INSTANCES OF TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES IN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT ANY OFF-SETTING EMPLOYERS' REPRESENTATION).

8. SFP EXECUTIVE THEN HAD TO DECIDE WHETHER TO PULL OUT OF GOVERNMENT, A COURSE OF ACTION IT REJECTED, OR FIND ANOTHER MORE SUITABLE CANDIDATE. DURING EVENING HOURS OF SEPTEMBER 6 THEY SURFACED A RELATIVE UNKNOWN, IN THE PERSON OF CARL-OLAF HOMEN, AS THEIR MAN FOR DEFENSE POST. HOMEN IS 38, LAWYER BY TRAINING. EMPLOYED FOR MANY CONFIDENTIAL

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YEARS IN INDUSTRY FROM MELIN'S FACTION, BUT LARGELY KNOWN ONLY AS SPORTS FEDERATION EXECUTIVE AND CHAIRMAN OF SFP'S LOCAL ORGANIZATION IN ESPOO CITY. HE DOES NOT LOOK UPON HIMSELF AS PROFESSIONAL POLITICAN--A DECIDED PLUS FOR ANYONE ASPIRING TO TOP OFFICE IN SFP. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN WHAT DID MELIN IN, HE SO OBVIOUSLY SOUGHT JOB-- PERHAPS TOO HARD AND TOO OBVIOUSLY. HOMEN BIO WILL BE SUBMITTED BY SEPARATE AIRGRAM. KREHBIEL

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